

DANBURY NEWS-TIMES (CT)
24 June 1983

Firm dissects defense market

By Bob Chuvala
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DANBURY — Earlier this month, Edward M. Nebinger was sitting in his company's display booth at the Paris Air Show, chatting with an Associated Press reporter over coffee.

They were talking about the company's latest publication — an 800-page, two-volume book on some sophisticated new weaponry NATO countries are developing to thwart the Warsaw Pact's superiority in conventional weapons.

That conversation turned into a news story AP circulated around the world, appearing in newspapers in England, France and the United States. The publicity helped Nebinger's potential customers grasp the importance of the publication, and sales of the \$1,250 book "are beginning to take off now."

At the air show, however, the book was just off the press, he said, adding that "people needed some kind of introduction" to its contents before they would buy the thing.

But, he added, "word is getting out now" about the study Nebinger's staff at Forecast Associates on Sugar Hollow Road put together over a six-month period.

The study analyzes what he calls "evolutionary and revolutionary high-technology systems" that will "raise the nuclear threshold" and help dampen the potential for a global nuclear war.

"This is just another study for us," Nebinger said, "but its an important one."

It is important because it should help continue Forecast Associates' 30 to 40 percent increase in annual sales the small company has enjoyed since Nebinger founded it in 1973.

And if Nebinger's forecasts for his own company prove true, Forecast Associates should grow from sales of close to \$1 million today to about \$2.5 million within five years. At the same time, his staff of 25 people should grow to between 50 and 75 persons "easily."

To keep up with that growth, Forecast Associates will have to move out of its cramped, 6,000-square-foot leased facilities to at least 10,000 square feet within two years, Nebinger said. "We would love to have our own building, if we can see our way clear," he said.

"I see ourselves expanding rapidly to more than double and maybe triple our size during the next five years," he said. "The only limiting factors are getting good people and the financial resources to launch a new product."

That's because "we do everything within our own (financial) resources," which makes for slower growth but "a sound company," he said.

Nebinger describes Forecast Associates as a "market research and analysis company" specializing in "products concentrated in the de-

fense market." His staff researches worldwide publications, news articles and press releases from defense-oriented companies around the world, then analyzes and forecasts free-world markets for everything from general aviation civilian aircraft to military helicopters to missiles to tanks.

"The best thing we have going for us is perspective," Nebinger said. "We're looking at all the programs in a market segment, tracking them on a daily basis from unclassified sources."

The result is several 400-page

books of statistics, forecasts, diagrams and charts for each market the company covers. "Our specialty is 10-year forecasts" and providing "a complete overview and outlook for the market in units, dollar value and market shares," Nebinger said.

That means, for example, the company might delve into the military helicopter market, break it down by types of helicopter, then project the free-world demand for each type during the next decade.

The resulting publications are "important to planners, largely strategic planners" for major contractors, subcontractors or component manufacturers of aerospace and military hardware, Nebinger said.

"Many of them have to come up with long-range planning forecasts, and we offer an unbiased source they can check against their own calculations," he said. "For some companies, we're the best source in the world for this type of specialized information."

Forecast Associates' list of subscribers "reads like the Fortune 500 list — all the big aerospace co-

manies and just about every big gas turbine manufacturer in the world," Nebinger said. The company also receives orders from time to time from what Nebinger terms "the other side."

"We are cooperative with the CIA and don't hesitate to talk with them

if some orders come in" from Soviet-bloc countries, he said. But "we're not trying to give any aid or comfort to the enemy" and "we're not a CIA front," he said, adding that the company simply takes "unclassified information and just pulls it together."